



Quick Guide:

Best Practices for Podcast Hosting

Table of Contents

Preparation	P3
Recording Etiquette	P4
Guest Interviews	P5



Being a great podcast host is crucial if you want to keep your listeners hooked and coming back for more. The secrets to excellent hosting lie in episode prep, confidence, and making sure your show feels approachable. After all, if you want listeners to have your voice to their ear for an entire episode (or more), it's important that they feel like you're someone worth listening to.

After working with dozens of podcasts in the HubSpot Podcast Network, we've learned a thing or two about hosting and recording etiquette. Here are some of our best tips.

Preparation

When it comes to podcast hosting, preparation is key to engaging your audience effectively. You might be tempted to grab a mic and talk freely for an hour, but you'll probably find that taking time to organize your thoughts before hitting "record" will make the entire process easier for you—and the final episode more enjoyable for your listeners.

- 01 Start by establishing **a main theme** for each episode and ensure that you follow through on that theme throughout the recording. Episodes that **focus on one central topic** tend to perform better than those that cover multiple subjects, so maintaining a clear focus is essential.
- 02 Providing value in every episode is crucial. In your prep process, you should **identify your audience's pain points** and address them clearly in order to keep them engaged and coming back for more.
- 03 Clearly **communicate the value** early. To hook your audience, deliver or tease the value of the episode within the first 1-3 minutes.
- 04 It's often beneficial to **have a working title in mind before recording**, as it helps you stay on topic. The title makes a promise, and you need to deliver on that promise to your audience.
- 05 Think through how you will **define your expertise clearly** to establish yourself as a voice of authority in your niche. Highlight what sets you apart from others in the same space and the unique insights that only you can offer.



Questions to answer before recording:

- What value are you providing with this episode?
- What is this episode's one central theme or area of focus?
- What is the “hook” that will keep listeners engaged?
- What pain points does your audience have, and how will this episode address them?
- How are you a voice of authority in your space? Why should someone listen to you?
- What have you done that others in the same space haven't?
- What is your unique insight that can't be heard anywhere else?

Recording Etiquette

Ensuring top-notch recording etiquette for your podcast involves mastering the art of mic and sound management. These subtle adjustments can make a significant difference in the clarity of your audio output, allowing you to deliver a professional and captivating listening experience.

- 01 Maintain a consistent speaking position and aim to **speak directly into the mic**. Minimize unnecessary movements or shifts that could disrupt the audio quality, ensuring the mic remains pointed towards your mouth throughout the recording.
- 02 Keep in mind that **the mic is highly sensitive** and will pick up even the slightest noises, so be mindful of avoiding fidgeting or tapping on surfaces. Steer clear of distractions like clicking pens or tapping feet, and if you tend to talk with your hands, ensure they are positioned away from the mic or the surfaces it is resting on. Avoid wearing jewelry or clothing that could produce unwanted noise, such as dangling earrings, bracelets, or necklaces that might create interference with the recording.
- 03 Regularly **check and clean your microphone** to prevent dust or debris from affecting the audio quality. Consider investing in a pop filter or windscreen to minimize plosive noise like “p” and “b” sounds. You can also **adjust your microphone gain levels** to avoid distortion or clipping, ensuring a balanced and clear sound.

- 04 Always **wear headphones** during recording sessions. This not only allows you to monitor your voice and adjust your proximity to the mic but also enables you to leverage your voice effectively to convey emphasis and emotion throughout the episode.
- 05 Ensure your **recording space is optimized** for sound quality. Minimize background noise, such as fans, air conditioning units, or outside disturbances, that could impact your recording. Consider using soundproofing materials or choosing a quiet location to reduce unwanted noise pollution.
- 06 Prior to recording, you might want to **run through a few vocal warm-up exercises** to enhance the clarity and strength of your voice. Practice articulation and vary your pitch to maintain listener engagement throughout the episode. Stay hydrated to prevent vocal fatigue and ensure a consistent tone and delivery.

Guest Interviews

Preparing for a guest interview requires meticulous planning to ensure a smooth and engaging conversation. There are a few steps you can follow to enhance the experience for you, your guests, and episode listeners.



Pre-Interview Preparation:

- 01 Conduct **thorough research on your guest** and the topic to be discussed. No matter how well you know the topic or guest, avoid the temptation to wing it. Going into an interview without proper preparation won't yield the best results—and your audience will know. Your guests' social accounts is a good starting point to see what they've been talking about recently.
- 02 **Structure your discussion** in three parts: beginning, middle, and end. Map out questions within these segments to guide the conversation effectively. Pick themes and the pillars you want to focus on throughout the conversation. You should know exactly where you want to take the conversation and lead your guest there.

- 03 Choose **themes and key topics** to focus on throughout the interview, leading the conversation in a direction that adds value to your audience. If something unexpected and valuable comes up, great! But knowing where the conversation should go will help you steer it back on track.
- 04 **Mapping out your conversation** will help you tremendously as you move through the discussion and stay 2 steps ahead. Each question should set up the next. Don't script it, but make sure you have clear bullet points to follow.
- 05 When choosing questions, ask yourself, “**will this add value to the listening audience**, or is it just my own curiosity?” If the audience feels like they're constantly outside the conversation, they'll stop listening.
- 06 **Make your guests feel at-ease** by complimenting their work and showing genuine interest. This will encourage openness and authenticity during the interview. Most interviews are cookie-cutter copycats. You will stand out by knowing about them in detail.



During the Interview:

01 The best interviewers focus on **listening more than talking**. Allow your guests to take the spotlight and share their insights. Craft questions that resonate with your audience and elicit compelling responses.

02 Frame questions in a **relatable manner**, avoiding personal anecdotes that may detract from the guest's narrative. Be careful not to make the conversation about you.

Instead of “In my experience, I get very anxious when I travel because of so many people around me crossing my personal boundaries. How can I resolve that?”

Try this: “Many people get anxious when they travel and are uncomfortable with a lot of people that may cross their personal boundaries; what’s a good way to resolve that?”

03 Ask **one question at a time** and **refrain from interrupting** to maintain the flow of the conversation and allow the guest to express their thoughts fully.

Instead of this: “Was your professor the kind who stood up in class and lectured all day and then gave assignments covering all the stuff you had to read all over again, or was it more like he would assign you a bunch of readings he wrote and you would come to class and have long discussions about why he made those choices?”

Try this: “Tell me about your professor.” Let them answer. Then: “What was his lecture style like?” Let them answer, then ask: “What were some of the things he made you read?”

04 Take notes to **capture key points** raised by the guest, enabling you to circle back to relevant topics and follow up effectively. Many times, a guest will answer your question, which will spark another question in your mind. Taking notes will help you ensure you’re making the best use of your limited recording time, and hitting the important areas of focus that you prepared to address.

05

Be **succinct and specific in your communication**, aiming to convey your message clearly and efficiently within the allotted time. Your recording time is limited, the listener has a short attention span, and you want the conversation to flow quickly and efficiently, so think ahead and choose your words wisely.

Questions to answer as you prepare for your interview:

- What do I want this episode to feel like? A casual hang, a formal discussion, a behind-the-scenes inside glimpse?
- What does my audience want to know most from this person? What is the most value I can extract from this, for my audience?
- What questions will give me great clippable content?
- How can I explain my point/ask my question with the fewest words while being descriptive and accurate?

